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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 000997

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/28/19
TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM MOPS MARR UG CG SU
SUBJECT: UGANDA/DRC/CAR/SUDAN: OPERATION RUDIA II UPDATE
(AUGUST 28, 2009)

REF: KINSHASA 00784

Classified By: P/E Chief Aaron Sampson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Background: This cable is a periodic update on the regional military operation against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) known as Operation Rudia II. This report is not meant to provide an overarching narrative or polished analysis of the operation, but rather offers spot information gleaned in Uganda only, from U.S. Mission sources. We recognize the regional scope of the operation and the fact that our sources may be limited in their knowledge and perspective on Rudia II. End background.

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MILITARY UPDATE
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¶2. (S) The Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) continues to pursue LRA elements in eastern DRC and in the Central African Republic (CAR). On 26 August, the UPDF engaged with an LRA element southeast of Obo, CAR and killed two LRA rebels. They believe this group was under the command of Joseph Kony's Deputy, Major General Okot Odhiambo, and assess that the group is heading towards a possible meeting point near the DRC/CAR border. The Kampala Combined Intelligence Fusion Cell (KCIFC) assesses that this is the original meeting location LRA elements had planned to move to and meet up at in early August. Information obtained from previously captured LRA Major Okot supports this assessment.

¶3. (S) Based on recent engagements, the UPDF assess with high confidence that Joseph Kony is in CAR. The UPDF engaged with an LRA element on 21 August approximately 130 kilometers northwest of Obo, CAR. They believe this group was Kony's personal security detachment and that Kony was present during the engagement. This supports two earlier reports of sightings of Kony's security detachment the week of 17 August. The UPDF has confirmed the group's location and reports the group is currently heading southeast towards the CAR/DRC border for a possible meeting. According to captured LRA Major Okot, the LRA also plans to settle in CAR.

¶4. (S) Although bad weather has hindered operations and field reporting, the UPDF have continued to pressure the LRA. The UPDF maintain the tactical advantage, keeping the LRA on the run and preventing the LRA from reorganizing. If the LRA is allowed to reorganize and resupply, then the threat to civilian population centers will almost certainly increase. We suspect the LRA are targeting WFP food drops as a source of re-supply, and we are encouraging humanitarian organizations to coordinate their efforts closely with local law enforcement and military to provide additional civilian protection.

¶5. (S) Continuing offensive operations against the LRA are assessed to be the most effective way of restoring security, protecting civilian population centers, and facilitating

access for organizations delivering humanitarian assistance to displaced and refugee populations. The UPDF logistics system is strained, however, which presents a serious impediment to ongoing offensive operations. If Kony continues to move further north into CAR, it will further strain an already taxed UPDF logistics resupply system.

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HUMANITARIAN SITUATION
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¶ 6. (SBU) DRC: The World Food Program (WFP) continues its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance in the Orientale Province of the DRC, initiating a second wave of food supply airdrops on 17 August. WFP reports that 157 tons of food items will be delivered to 10,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host families in Dingila.

¶ 7. (SBU) CAR: WFP also dispatched a convoy from Bangui to Obo on 19 August, delivering food and possibly Red Cross elements to the area.

¶ 8. (SBU) Sudan: According to the Uganda daily the New Vision, WFP is evacuating border areas and initiating airdrops in southern Sudan due to increasing LRA attacks in the region. WFP Country Director Kindru Oshidari told reporters at a 24 August Khartoum press conference that WFP had evacuated from the Ezo region. Oshidari said the LRA had stolen WFP food items from Ezo the week before, and called on the southern Sudan army (SPLA) to increase civilian protection efforts if they were to continue working in the area. Oshidari announced that WFP will initiate airdrops of food into areas

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of southern Sudan facing famine, aiming to provide over 22,000 tons of food to 300,000 people by the end of the year.

(Note: According to Consulate Juba poloff, WFP is planning airdrops in eastern areas of Sudan, far from where the LRA is operating on the Sudan/CAR/DRC border. Post is unaware of any planned drops in LRA affected areas. End Note.)

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Comment
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¶ 9. (S) The KCIFC and UPDF assess that the LRA are moving southeast towards a meeting point at the DRC/CAR border. However, if the LRA groups see an opportunity to re-supply in southern Sudan in the form of WFP food drops, they may alter their course. Post agrees with Embassy Kinshasa's assessment reftel that additional humanitarian resources in LRA-affected areas could aggravate the security situation. LRA elements have demonstrated their willingness to attack villages in DRC and southern Sudan to raid humanitarian distributions of food items, non-food items, and medicine. Humanitarian airdrops, like those being proposed by WFP in southern Sudan, are targets for LRA forces and would likely draw the LRA to the drop areas. Not only would this bring additional violence to civilian populations, but it would likely strengthen and reinvigorate the LRA, whose food and ammunition supplies are currently low.

¶ 10. (S) The UPDF are not providing civilian protection in the border areas of southern Sudan, and would not likely respond to increased needs for civilian protection in the area. Humanitarian organizations should be encouraged to coordinate any planned airdrops closely with the SPLA and other regional partners to provide as much civilian protection as possible in drop areas. End Comment.

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